

ROBYN GIBSON

EPILOGUE

The idea for this book came to me almost 25 years ago when I read then reread France's profound quote about the import of fashion. A lot has happened since that time. A child was born. A marriage ended. A career in academic began.

What was once shelved for retirement resurfaced with the passing of my beloved mother, Mabel Jessie Carter. I desperately wanted to acknowledge the crucial part she had played in my decision to undertake a PhD in an area I had been informed was "unworthy of scholarly investigation." So, I set out to prove the naysayers wrong. In doing so, I learnt a lot about myself and my relationship with my Mother. The lady who loved clothes and embedded this passion into my very core. A self-indulgent, therapeutic whim perhaps but what surprised me was the lasting imprint this deeply personal exercise had on the other contributors to this book.

This not only mattered to me, it had found inroads into the very fabric of other people's lives. It was an opportunity to reveal something lost or forgotten and in doing so, to unpick those memories and reconnect to those who played a part in our 'dress stories.'

An estranged relationship with a sister began to heal when details of their deceased sister's dresses needed to be confirmed. A photograph was located and forwarded.

Three men who had celebrated Mardi Gras together in their twenties combed through photographs of the event some 40 years later. Dates and events were debated and fond memories relived.

A brother was asked to locate the book that lay by his mother's bedside the night she passed away. Could he find the quote she was looking for?

A young man contacts the granddaughter of his safari suit's original owner. Could she share any insights to enrich his story?

An aunt was phoned. Could she tell me about my Mother's wedding dress? The one that now hung in my wardrobe. And as if it were yesterday, she shared a shopping expedition that had occurred more than 50 years previously.

Viewed as visual objects, clothing is not frivolous, flippant or foolish. In telling and talking about clothes, we reveal much about ourselves, our lives and the experiences that we drape around our bodies. Whether bought or handmade, passed down or reconstructed, clothes help us to construct meaning as we recall those

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things in our lives that matter. After all, “clothes are part of the fabric of memory” (Weber, 2011, p. 239) and I thank each who has given me the privilege of collecting and sharing their memory of clothes.